

Charlotte Eswyn Toutain

“Charlotte Eswyn Toutain signed for the French female volunteers corps on 27 November 1940 with the number 70049, the first item for this group being 70000. She is the 50th to sign.”

The Imperial War Museum holds unpublished papers for Charlotte Eswyn Toutain – this summary is unattributed and reproduced in good faith:

Manuscript journal in French (183pp) and English (71pp) June 1940 - August 1950, describing her service as a nurse attached to the 68th French Infantry Division (68e Division d'Infanterie) (her status is not further defined) around Dunkirk/St Malo in May 1940, her joining the Free French Forces in London (British born, dual British/French nationality) in November 1940, her service in London as NCO nurse/switchboard operator describing numerous meetings with senior Free French officers including de Gaulle and Koenig, morale (especially after the Darlan incident), bombing raids, her joy on returning to France (Le Mans, Chartres and Paris, 23 August 1944), giving good descriptions of civilian conditions and morale, outbreaks of fighting (including at de Gaulle's reception at Notre Dame and, an air raid of 26 August), recriminations against 'collaborators', discrimination against British-born Free French, VE Day and other celebrations, demobilization (October 1945), subsequent service attached to British Army HQ in Paris (1945-1947), attacks on her by Communist thugs, return to London (1947) and service in the RASC TA (1950).

Extracts the Imperial War Museum website (<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/reflections-on-victory-memories-of-ve-day>)

The end of hostilities was celebrated across a Europe liberated from war and occupation. In Paris, British-French nurse **Charlotte Toutain** had been serving with the Free French Forces. In her diary she recorded the first spontaneous celebrations in the evening of 7th May:

“We listen to the news on the wireless, and the announcement comes through ... Armistice We all rush off to a nearby theatre where friends [...] are playing to give them the news. They announce it from the stage. We go to a café next door and buy a bottle of champagne, and celebrate in the dressing rooms with the girls”.

“As we reached the Arc de Triomphe, we watched for a few minutes the firework display, then we started down the Champs Elysees, when a jeep with American Air Force officers offered us a lift. As there was a terrible crowd in the streets we accepted the offer. [...] Then we went up and down the Champs Elysees, until we were almost dizzy”.

“[8th May] Today is Victory Day!!! It seems almost impossible, but yes, at last...With Dorothy I go to the office, and we pretend to work ... who wants to work today!”

The People 24 June 1951

THIS WILL MAKE REDS HOWL, SAYS WOMAN EX-SPY

In a quiet Hounslow (London) boarding-house yesterday, a French Resistance heroine, Charlotte Toutain, thirty-four, put the final touch to a book which she says will "make the Communists howl," She came to London because in France the Communists tried to stop he writing it.

"I was General De Gaulle's secretary," she said, "The French Communists raided my Paris flat, smashed everything and set the manuscript ablaze in the middle of the carpet.

"They took my girl friend and me to their headquarters, stripped us, and splashed us with cold water for hours."

Charlotte found later that her landlady was a fervent Communist and had given party agents the key to her flat.

Charlotte's book, called "Together," tells of her Resistance experiences, which include rescuing wounded from No Man's Land before the Maginot Line (for which she won the Croix de Guerre) and helping British wounded.

Later she trained as an Allied spy. It was then that she found how treacherous and violent the Communists were when it suited party ends, and she gives details of their treachery in her book.

(2021 – I can't find any trace of this book)

This summary concerning Charlotte Eswyn Toutain was compiled from various sources of unknown accuracy by Tony Barton for the Friends of Newport and Carisbrooke Cemeteries
<http://www.foncc.org.uk>